

A STUDY OF ROMANS
ROMANS 6 – PART 2
Taught by Bruce Bickel
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Let's ask the Lord to be our teacher. Heavenly Father, it's with a sense of pure joy and a sense of awe that we assemble tonight, recognizing that we have been in your presence because you are omnipresent—you've been with us all day. Father, we just pray now that you would remove the frustrations of this week, that our minds might be godly centered, that you would be pleased to have your Holy Spirit be our Teacher. To that end, we just pray, Lord, that you would open our eyes that we might behold you more clearly for Christ's sake. Amen.

If you'd be kind enough to turn by Bibles to Romans 6, on your outline, we'll be looking at the second portion, our living for Christ. Last week, we looked at verses 1-14, which dealt with our union in Christ, and now we're going to talk about our living for Christ. Let us hear the Word of the Lord beginning at verse 15 of chapter 6 of the book of Romans.

“¹⁵What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! ¹⁶Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? ¹⁷But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, ¹⁸and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. ¹⁹I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations. For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification. ²⁰For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. ²¹But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. ²²But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life. ²³For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Last week, friends, we talked about what it meant to be in union with Christ, that we've been crucified with Christ, we were buried with Christ, we were resurrected with Christ—all of those things that happened to him because of our union. We're no longer in Adam. We are now in Christ. All of those things that happened to him, they happened to us positionally, and God looks at us radically different now because of our justification by faith alone. Remember justification is God giving you credit for the sinless perfection and perfect obedience of Christ. That's what justification is. It's a forensic term where God now looks at you positionally different, and therefore, he treats us radically different because of our position, no longer being in Adam, we are now in Christ.

Now we come to the second portion of this 6th Chapter. It appears that Paul is going to repeat himself, but there's a subtle difference between what he said in verse 1 of Romans 6, and what he's now saying in verse 15. If you look at verse 1, I read from the English Standard Version, if you look at verse 1, his logic was this, “In view of the fact that grace super abounds, where sin abounds, shall we not therefore continue to sin?” You see, that's verse 1 of Chapter 6. The confusion is here in verse 15. Now he begins to unravel this a little bit because it's the same concept but with a different focus. Since God's grace has set us free from the law, does this mean that we go on sinning? It's the same question that we saw in Romans 6:1, but with a different twist. It has a different form.

Verse 15 means this, “In view of the fact that we are not under law anymore, but under grace, does it not follow that we can live as we want, like it doesn't make any difference what we do because there's no

longer any law, and we are under grace?” You see, essentially, that’s what he’s asking in verse 15. In the rest of this Chapter, he proceeds to explain—in the remainder of this Chapter—once again, the absurdity of that type of a deduction, and that such a conclusion really indicates a person’s total lack of understanding what it means to be justified by faith alone.

Martin Lloyd Jones—one of my favorite preachers from history past—makes this statement, “If the grace that you have does not lead you to obedience, you don’t have grace at all.” If the grace you have doesn’t motivate you or lead you to obedience, you don’t have any grace at all.

Paul is really dealing with the absurdity of the question that says, “If grace abounds where sin is, so we just continue sin?” and he said, “No.” In verse 15, he takes the same approach and said, “If we’re not under law, does that mean we should go on in sinning because there’s no law to tell us what to do? Should we do the same thing?” He’s dealing with that same question of the misunderstanding of justification by faith alone.

I think it’s important, friends, that we understand three different words—antinomianism, legalism and grace. Antinomianism, which means anti-law, anti-law, basically says this—it doesn’t make any difference what I do. That’s antinomianism—anti-law, against the law. It doesn’t make any difference what I do. Legalism says it makes a difference what I do. It makes a difference what I do. Another way of looking at legalism is what I do makes a difference. What I do makes a difference.

Look at that. If you understand justification, you’ve been given credit for the sinless perfection and perfect obedience of Christ. How can you improve upon perfection? You can’t. That’s where legalism comes in. Legalism says, “I’m going to improve upon perfection because what I do makes a difference.” That’s legalism. It’s basically saying what Christ did was not enough because I can add on top of that, so what I do does make a difference. The antinomian says what I do doesn’t make any difference; it doesn’t make any difference what I do. Legalism says what I do makes a difference. Grace says this, “What I have done for you makes the difference.” That’s what grace says, “What I have done for you makes the difference.” Those are a couple of words we need to understand as we work our way through Romans 6.

The two keywords we must understand here at the very beginning of Romans 6:15-17 are sin and law. We need to understand that. The word sin here means deliberate and persistent sin. It means continuance in the state of sin; persistence in the habit of it. It means continual, habitual persistence in pertaining to a sinful lifestyle; the choices you make, you choose to do those and you just continue to do them. He’s talking about the persistence, the habitual continuation of sin. It doesn’t mean a fall into occasionally sinful activities. You see, many people who would say after falling into a single act of sin, would say, “Well I can’t have been born again because I just sinned.” The Apostle John says in 1 John 3:8-9, “He that sins is of the devil.” So the person would say, “I just fell into sin, so I’m of the devil and I’m not in Christ,” if they follow that logic.

In both 1 John and in Romans 6, the word sin does not mean occasional act of falling into sin; it means the habitual sin that you continue in as a style of life. If it were the other side and it meant the individual single act of sin, then there could be no such thing as a Christian at all, if it meant a single act of sin, it can’t mean that, in its context. So that’s the first word we need to understand. As we work our way through this, he’s teaching us how to deal with these continual acts of sin and we’ll see that in a moment.

The second important word for us to understand in this passage is the term “under law.” What does it mean when we say, “You’re no longer under law”? It does not mean the ceremonial law that we read about in the Scripture. This is talking about the demands of the moral law, our conduct. It means that we are no longer under the law in the sense that our salvation depends upon our keeping and observing the

law. We are no longer under the law in the sense of it is our activities that earn or achieve our salvation. We're set free from that. We're no longer in a system, Paul says, that says, "Do this and don't do that and you will live." That's the position of every non-believer. Every non-Christian is in that position because they basically say, "I can justify myself through my own conduct. I can justify myself. I can act in a way that God's going to change his opinion of me because of what I do." That's what you would call self-justification.

All of a sudden, they're confronted with the law of the Scripture. The Scripture would basically say this, "Okay. If you can justify yourself by acts of righteousness that you perceive to be good, to improve God's position of you, then do this and you shall live, and if you don't do it, you won't live." That's the difference. Paul is saying we're not under law in the sense of we're earning our salvation by our activities. We're not in that system under the law that says it's your conduct or you are activities that earns your salvation. Paul is basically saying this, that we're no longer in a position that our salvation is determined by our actions and by our works. We are not under that legalistic system that says you must do this.

The old covenant, which is the way in which God related to the nation of Israel, was essentially this—if you obey, I will be your God. What does that mean when you don't obey?

Audience Member: I won't be your God.

He won't be your God. That's under the law. If you do this, then I'll do that. The new covenant is this, "I will be your God and I will do this." There's a difference. The old covenant basically said, "Do this and you'll live. Don't do that, and you won't live." Now we see that we're not under that legalistic system anymore of having our salvation be an expression of our own acts and our own works. Our salvation is entirely of grace, and it's all by grace, is what Paul is teaching us.

Then we come to the correction. He dealt with that confusion in the first couple of verses, and now he makes the correction. His answer is, "Of course not." You don't take that deduction and say because you're no longer under the law, can you just go ahead and do what you want because you're a free man; there's nothing to guide you anymore. He says, "Of course not." Then notice his logic in verses 16-18, "Don't you realize that whatever you choose to do, whomever you choose to obey, becomes your master?" He says, "Don't you realize that? Whoever you choose to obey, that system will become your master. You can choose sin, which leads to death, or you can choose to obey God, which leads to righteousness and his approval. But whomever you choose, you become that person's slave, that system's slave, and they become your master." Now to say that we're not under law does not mean that we are lawless, or that we are a law unto ourselves. That's not what Paul is saying.

Take a look at the logic behind his proposition. He's saying this, "Don't you understand that whomever you yield yourself to, you become that person's slave to obey them? They become your master. If I sell myself to a certain power, I then become a slave to that power, and that power that has it over me is the power of a slave owner, and I'm the slave." He's basically saying that if you choose this style of life, you have a master over you, and you are its slave. That's what he says in verses 16 and 17.

When you look at it honestly, folks, there are only two ultimate totalitarian powers. Only two. Sin and obedience. They're the only two that exist. That's the great theme of Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8 of the book of Romans. You are either in Adam or you're in Christ. No other option. Notice these two powers are opposite of each other. They are both slave owners. That's the imagery he's using. They're both slave owners, and they're both masters of people who choose their system. The difference between sin and obedience is the difference between, Paul says, the devil and God. Those are the two options. Those are the two powers; the two totalitarian powers are the devil and God. It's the difference between hell and

heaven. It's the difference between lawlessness and righteousness. That's the difference. Whichever one you choose, Paul says, "Don't you understand this? That when you choose lawlessness, you become a slave to that system, and you have a master who is the devil over you, and you are his slave."

Conversely, if you choose righteousness, you choose Christ, because of justification by faith alone, you're no longer in Adam, you're now in Christ. Now you are under the system where you also have a master. You are also a slave. But you're a slave not to sin; you're a slave to righteousness, because the one to whom you give yourself to is the one who will be your master. The one who you give yourself to is the one who, you will become his slave." And there are only two choices, Paul says. Sin or obedience, which leads to righteousness.

You see, one produces death and the other produces life. Look at verse 23 of Chapter 6. Those are the two options Paul is saying, and he's logic, he's very logical. He says, "Don't you understand this?" But his real inclination is this, "Do you understand what it means to no longer be in Christ? No longer be in Adam? You're now in Christ. You're now under a new master. You are now a slave to a different slave owner. But both are masters. And both are slaves to the master whom they give themselves to."

What Paul is saying in this correction in verses 15-18 is this. We are utterly a slave of one or a slave of the other. You're a slave of one or a slave of the other. You see, that's why Jesus says in Matthew 6:24, "You can't serve two masters." There are only two masters. You can't serve them both. So many people get into difficulty when they try to serve two masters—the system of this world and the system of the kingdom. You can't do that. Paul is reminding us, as he corrects us, you see, if you have a faulty understanding of justification by faith alone, you're going to think that you can have one foot in one camp and the other foot in the other camp. Paul says if you really understand justification, you'll understand this—that you're no longer in Adam, you're no longer in that camp. You're now in Christ. You can't serve two masters. You have to realize who am I now? How does God view me through justification, and that means I am now a slave to God and to Christ, not a slave to Satan and the devil. Whoever you choose, he says, to follow, is the one who will be your master.

What Paul is saying is this—that no person is free. There's no such thing as freedom, in a sense of being absolutely independent. I am not independent if I'm in Christ. I am not independent if I'm in Adam. There's no way that you're free in either one of those systems because you've got a master and you're a slave. You're not free in the sense of being totally independent to do what you want. You see, you have to act out your nature. That's the whole doctrine of total depravity. Sometimes people say, "Why does this person do that?" Well, if they're giving evidence because they're not in Christ, that's all they can do. They can't do anything else, because their nature says, "I'm a slave to the system, and I can't do anything other than that." We have expectations that people ought to act like Christians just because they go to church. That may not mean anything. Are they in Christ? Or are they in Adam? We have this expectation that, "Why don't they think like I do?" If you're in Christ, they're not going to think like you do. "Why don't they treat people like I do?" They're not going to do that. They can't do that.

I don't mean to be disrespectful, but sometimes all they can do is just be a jerk. They can't do anything else, because that's who they are. That's what Paul is saying. They're either a slave that has a master of this system, or they're a slave who has a master in this system. But you're not free. You're not free. You see, everybody has a master. The master is either sin or righteousness. It's either the devil or it's God. That's it. That's what Paul is saying. He says, "Don't you understand that?" It's really quite simple. Who you choose to follow becomes your master, and you're never free. You weren't free when you were in Adam, and you're not free when you're in Christ.

I want to spend a couple of minutes on verse 17, as we work our way through this. Let me read verse 17 to you, from the English Standard Version, "¹⁷But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of

sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed.” As I was studying that this week, it really dawned on me that this verse is one of the clearest descriptions of what a Christian is. Never heard it taught this way. It just kind of gets lost in what Paul is saying. But if you really want to know what a believer is, a follower of Christ, I think this verse tells you as much as anything really what it means to be a Christian.

Notice, first of all, a Christian is somebody who’s undergone a very, very significant change. They’ve undergone a significant, radical, great change. Notice the words “you were.” You see, there’s your contrast—you were. That’s what once was true of us. That was true of us. We “were” this. But no longer is that true of you. You are now an entirely different position, an entirely different change, because you’ve gone through a character alteration. You were, but you have become. Do you see that? Wonderful contrast. “You were (verse 17), but thanks be to God that you who were once slaves of sin” that’s who you used to be, “have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching.” You were…have become. Do you see that? That’s why I say a Christian is somebody who has gone through a radical, significant, great change in their life because they’re no longer “you were,” but “you have become.” Do we really understand that? That’s his whole point of justification. That means you were in Adam and now you are in Christ.

Let me try to explain this. You’re now in an entirely different position. You were…have become. Do you see the contrast? One is past tense reality; the other is present tense reality. You were, have become. Now nobody is born a Christian, Paul is telling us in this verse. Nobody’s born a Christian. Something has to happen to us before you can become a Christian. You were, you have become. Something has to happen to you. You were not born a believer. You’re not born a follower of Christ. You’re not born a Christian. How many times do you ask somebody, “Are you a Christian?” “Yes, I was born one.” That’s the idea because they’ve been in church all their life. You see, that just gives a complete misunderstanding of the whole concept of justification. That’s Paul’s argument here. You can’t become a Christian on your own. Something has to happen to you. You see, Paul is teaching us in this verse that a Christian is a person who’s gone through, undergone a radical change that the only way you can describe it is this. You were, but have become. That’s the only way you can describe it. You were this; you have become that. That’s his description of a believer, and it’s saying this. A person is a follower of Christ, the person has gone from being in Adam to in Christ; has gone through a radical, significant change, and the only way you can describe it is this. You were like this, but you have become this. The contrast is so significant. You see, something has happened to the person, and you’re entirely different. Notice what does Paul do? He thanks God for it. That’s really critical. But thanks be to God. You see that? It starts right there. That tells you something. Who does something to you?

Audience Members: God.

God does. You were, you have become, and he thanks God for doing it because he knows this. I had nothing to do with it. That’s justification by faith alone. You see that?

Let me walk you through this. Christianity does not merely deal with one part of a person. That’s what makes it different from all the false religions, all the cults, and all of the moral movements we’ve had in our history. It doesn’t deal with one aspect of the person. It radically changes you at three levels. You’ll see that in this verse. Christianity changes a person’s entire personality. Notice, “You have obeyed.” You’ll see that. There’s your will. Your will is radically changed. You have obeyed. Now you have the desire to want to be obedient, where before you didn’t give a rip about it. Something changed in you when you became a Christian. When God justified you by faith, he changed your will and he gave you a desire to want to be obedient. The first thing that we see that changes in your conversion is your will changes. You don’t change it. You don’t make up your mind to become a Christian. God did something

to you. He changed you from you were to you have become. The first thing he deals with is your will. He now gives you the desire to want to do these things.

Secondly is this—from the heart; you'll notice wholeheartedly the Scripture says. There's your emotion. Your emotions change. They go through a radical change of emotions. The things that were appealing to you now are not appealing to you. Those things are different now because you have a whole different sense of emotion. Now you begin to look at things more differently. You look at people differently. You have different emotions because you've gone through a radical change. Not only has my will changed, but my emotions have changed. I now pursue different things from the heart. That's why what Jesus says about the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks. That's an indication of a change. You see, if you want to know if a person's a believer, listen to them talk. What do they talk about? What's the subject of their conversations? What words do they use? What colloquial expressions do they use? You see, a person that goes through a radical change is going to have their heart changed and their emotions changed. They're going to talk differently because something happened to them that is so great, that the only way you can describe it is this. You were, but you have become.

Your will changes, your heart changes, your emotions change, and thirdly is your mind to the standard of teaching, to the standard of doctrine. All of a sudden, you start believing things differently and you're committed to a different standard of belief. That's your mind. When a person is converted, they're converted at three levels—their heart, their will and their mind. You see, that's what makes Christianity radically different than all the false religions, the moral movements and the cults, because they only deal with one of those separately.

Such a change a person goes through to become a Christian is the change that affects you in your mind, it affects in your heart and it affects you in your will. Those things are all radically changed. The only way that Paul can describe it, because it changes so significant, the only way he can describe it is you were, you have become. That means this—you can't be converted in your heart only. You can't be converted in your will only. And you can't be converted in your mind only. You see, if you're truly converted, truly born again, and you truly understand justification by faith alone, all three of those are involved. The whole person is radically changed.

Let me deviate a little bit here for a moment, and give you some applications of this. Do you follow what I'm saying? It's so significant. Your whole personality changes. So much of preaching today, in the pulpit in the church today, isolates one of the three, but doesn't deal with all three at the same time. There's a type of music, a type of worship, a type of preaching that makes a direct appeal to the emotion only, and nothing else. I would call that sloppy sentimental type of Christianity. All they want to do is appeal to your emotions. So what do we do? We cut down the length of the sermon. Make sure we get more music. Because all we're going to do is we want to appeal to their emotions. If we can change their emotions, they're going to change. They'll want to come back. You see, they're dealing with only one aspect of justification by faith alone—only the emotions. So much of our preaching today is designed to appeal to your emotions. Let me tell you a great story from Reader's Digest. Let me give you the greatest from the movies. You see, I'm just going to appeal to your emotions because if I can grab your emotions, then I'm going change you. That's not the biblical gospel at all, Paul tells us. You see, the Gospel is not like that.

There's also a form of preaching that specializes in the appeal to the will. It possesses little doctrinal content, because what you've got to do, the battle is between me and your will, and I've got to make sure that I do something to get you off of your seat to come up here and make a decision so you'll come to Christ, raise your hand, walk an aisle, sign the card, do whatever you do, because the battle is me and your will. I'm going to have my preaching deal with your will, and so I'm going to do everything I can

to manage your will. You see, and you miss the whole point. That's false religion. That's not the Gospel, Paul tells us.

You see, there's tremendous pressure brought to bear on the people in the realm of their wills to decide for Christ, to do something. You see, the battleground is I've just got to get you to decide to do something. If I can get you to raise your hand, if I can get you to walk the aisle, if I can get you to invite Christ, you see I've won the battle of your will. That's not preaching; that's manipulation. That's not the Gospel, according to Paul. Paul says the radical person is changed three ways. Their will is changed. They've got a different desire. Their emotion is changed. They think differently. And their will changes, and their mind changes because they believe a different standard of doctrine, because their belief system is changed.

The point I'm trying to make is this, is that any of these three partial emphases is unworthy of calling it the biblical gospel. If our minds and hearts and wills are not engaged, we don't understand justification at all, because you see, it goes through such a radical change, Paul tells us. You were, now you've become, and all three, all three are hit.

In verse 18, Paul describes this change, such radical change, in the form of ownership. He says the same thing in verse 22. You've got a new owner. You see, mankind is always a slave. What Americans think, "I've never been a slave." Yes, you were. You were born a slave. You were in Adam. Mankind is always a slave. He's born a slave of sin, but by a second birth, he becomes a bond slave of the person and work of Christ. You see, man is never free. He is either a slave of sin or a slave of Satan, or he's a slave of God and the Lord Jesus.

Look the 1 Corinthians 6:19. You think you're free? Look at this verse. "You are not your own. You were bought with a price." Somebody bought you. You see, that's what redemption is. The whole theme of the Bible is this—redemption. It means rescued through the payment of a price. Somebody bought you back. Get this idea out of your head that you're free. If you are in Christ, you are not free. You were bought with a price, and you now have a new master, and you're a slave of the Lord Jesus Christ. Either that or you're a slave to sin and Satan. You see, the change is so radical, friends, in verse 17, that we've lost sight of that. All we try to do is win the battle of their will, motivate them by their emotions, or get them to believe a new system. If we do one of those three, we've got a new convert.

The idea here is, what's he talking about when he says a standard of doctrine that he's referring to? Well, it's the one that he started writing about in Chapter 1 of the book of Romans, all the way through Chapter 5. You see, the Gospel he's talking about takes him five chapters to describe it. It's just not your will, it's just not your emotion, it's just not your heart. Notice what he says. He starts with the holiness of God in Chapter 1. Then he deals with the sinfulness of man. Then he deals with the person and work of Christ. And then he deals with repentance and faith. You see, that's the Gospel. It's a far different cry than, "Come to Jesus and receive forgiveness." What do we do? All we offer is forgiveness. God is offering himself. Far different than just, "Come to Jesus and get forgiveness." You want to be forgiven of your sins? An idiot would say no. It's so different than what we hear in the pulpits today. So different than our evangelism. We just try to manipulate one of the three, rather than realizing there's a significant power behind the preaching of the Gospel.

Think of it this way. If you had a mold, and you poured molten steel into this mold, and after it would dry and harden, you would pull it out of that mold and you would take on the shape of that mold. This tells us something, that this must be the work of somebody else, because you can't pour yourself into the mold. Somebody has to do that. That's what Paul is saying. Somebody has taken you. Thanks be to God. He's taken you, poured you into a new mold, which is now in Christ, and when you come out of that, you take on a whole new disposition of your mind, your will and your heart, because the change is so

radical and so great, that the only way he can describe it is you were, but now you have become. What he's basically saying in summary is this. You can't make yourself a Christian. That's the work of another. You can't do that. It's the work of another. Who is that? It's God.

Let me give you some cross references. Go to Ephesians 2. Notice, who does this? Who pours you into the mold of in Christ? You don't do it yourself. Ephesians 2:1-5, "¹And you were dead in the trespasses and sins ²in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— ³among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind." That's who you were. You were. Next verse, "⁴But God..." I'm so grateful for that little apostolic "but." The word "but." "⁴But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ."

Who poured you into the old of being in Christ? God did. That's why Paul starts at verse 17 with this phrase, "But thanks be to God." Because he knows this. You can't make yourself a Christian. Somebody has to do that. God is the one who does it.

Go to Titus 3:1-5, "¹Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, ²to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people." You see, that's the new mold you have. He just listed there seven virtues that are the description of who you and I are now because our radical change. Notice the contrast, "³For we ourselves were once," you were, "foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. ⁴But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, ⁵he saved us," but thanks be to God, "not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy." You see, dearly beloved, you can't make yourself a Christian. God has to do that for you.

We talk a lot, in modern evangelism today, about having the right methodology; looking for new methods. So we take the Gospel and let's make a play out of the Gospel. Let's put it to music. Let's make it an art form. Let's have somebody dance the Gospel. You see, we do all these things because what are we trying to do? Trying to appeal to their emotions. Paul says this, "You were committed to a new standard of doctrine." The word doctrine means standard. You have a new belief system.

You see, we do have a methodology. It's what Paul wrote in Romans 1:16, "I'm not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power unto salvation to all who believe." Do you know what our methodology is? It is the power of a supernatural, miraculous God who takes people who were in Adam and puts them Christ. That's the motivation we have. That's the power we have. That's our methodology. We don't need another method. You don't dance the Gospel. You don't sing the Gospel. You don't act out the Gospel. You preach it, because you've got to appeal to their mind, you've got to appeal to their emotions, you've got to appeal to their heart. You see, you just can't do one, because we have a methodology. The methodology is not arts, although God is the author of the arts, and it's wonderful. But you don't share the Gospel through the arts, because you'll only do one of the three. You see, we have a methodology. It's called this—the miraculous, supernatural power of a holy God. That's the methodology that we have when we preach Christ. That's why Paul says, "I'm not ashamed of the Gospel, for it (the message) is the power of God." That's our methodology. Our methodology is the power of God, not the creation of man.

Go to John 3, the conversion of Nicodemus. You see, the problem with the church today, in my judgment, is this. We have made the Gospel human. The Gospel is not human. It is supernatural. It is the power of a supernatural, miraculous, powerful God. It is not human. What we try to do is make it human

so we can appeal to their emotions, their will or their mind. We've got a methodology, and that is the miraculous, supernatural power of a holy God, who takes a person who was in Adam and he puts them in Christ. But thanks be to God. You were (once), you have become.

Let me give you just a quick version of the story of Nicodemus. Nicodemus was a Pharisee. Righteously, he was externally perfect. Did all the things correctly. Impeccable lifestyle. Brilliant man in his theology. Jesus has a conversation with him and basically says this, "Nicodemus, you've got a lot of things right. You understand about judgment. You understand about rewards. You understand a lot about theology. However, you've made one external error; one fatal error, and that is this. You have externalized religion. You've made it something that you do. Let me tell you, Nicodemus, unless something supernatural happens to you, where God in heaven plants a life that has its origin in heaven, not in this earth, until something supernatural happens, to you (it's called being born again); Nicodemus, until something happens supernatural, you cannot even enter the kingdom of heaven."

The word "enter" there, or "see", means this. See how to get in, know how to get in, and enjoy the benefits of. He's saying this, "Nicodemus, until something miraculously supernatural happens to you, you can't even see the Kingdom, let alone enter it, let alone enjoy the benefits." That's what Paul says. But thanks be to God. You see, you cannot pour yourself into the mold. You cannot make yourself a Christian. Somebody has to do that for you. Paul is saying this. When you understand justification by faith alone, you'll understand that you were once in Adam, and now you're in Christ. You're in a different mold. And his answer is this, "But thanks be to God."

You see, we do have a methodology. We should never, ever forget the methodology of a supernatural, miraculous God who converts people through the proclamation of a biblical gospel. That's the power that we have. Until the church begins to start understanding that, we're just going to be lukewarm as we are now and make very little impact upon our culture. You see, there's so much of the world in us, because all we've tried to do is become like the world. You see, we're committed to a different standard of doctrine, he says. If you're a Christian today, if you're a believer today, who do you thank?

Audience Member: We thank God.

Who do you thank? You see, that's what Paul's point is, "But thanks be to God, because I knew this. I couldn't do it myself. You did it for me when I was dead in my trespasses and sins. You did it for me." When you understand that, your life changes. That's the radical change that he's talking about in verse 17.

Then he challenges us in verses 19-22. We're to take the members of our body and offer them as tools of righteousness. The meaning is clearly this—to be slaves of sin means to be the enemies of righteousness, and to be enemies of sin means to be the friends of righteousness." To be devoted to both sin and righteousness at the same time is impossible. Compare these words, which Jesus said this again, "No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he'll be devoted to the one and look down on the other." You can't serve both systems. What a wonderful contrast we see in these latter verses. We see the contrast of the past and a contrast of the present. From the contemplation of those things that we did in our lives for which we are ashamed, Paul now says with joy and gratitude, he turns to the description of our present. He now talks about our present. You pick that up in verse Romans 6:22, "But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God." That's who you have become. You were, you have become. Free from sin, and made servants of God. The benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the outcome is everlasting.

Let's go back and apply just the contrast of verse 17 with what he's told us in verses 17-23. First of all, you were formerly in bondage. You have become free from bondage. You were formerly a slave of sin.

You have become a servant of God. You were formerly consumed with vice. Now you are pursuing holiness; you have become the pursuit of holiness. You formerly were living a life of shame. Now you have peace of mind because you know the forgiveness of sins. You were formerly dead in your trespasses and sins, but now you have life eternal through the person and work of Christ.

Lastly, notice verse 23, the conclusion. “The wages of sin is death,” he tells us in verse 23. The word “wages” is a very interesting word. The word used in its original context indicates a ration, an amount of pay, especially it was referred to as a soldier’s pay. It’s interesting when you notice the selection of the Holy Spirit using that particular word in its original meaning—a soldier’s pay. That’s the normal use of it in the Scripture. The word “wages,” ration wages, soldier’s pay, has a military term to it; it has a military sense. What we can say is that sin is viewed as the general who pays out these wages. You see that? If you’re getting a soldier’s pay, you’re under the authority of somebody. Who’s the general? Satan is the general. That’s what you’re going to get because this is what the general’s going to pay you because that is your daily soldier’s pay. The wages of sin is death.

Now contrast that with the free gift of God is eternal life through our Lord Jesus Christ. The free gift of God is life everlasting. What a marvelous climax to this Chapter 6. What a comforting truth. The sinner who has fled to God in Christ finds refuge and receives the most for the least; receives eternal life for nothing. That’s because of the free grace of God’s gift to us in Christ.

So dearly beloved, if you’re a follower of Christ today, you’re in Christ, who do you thank? Just say, “But thanks be to God.” You see, that’s why you understand the security of your salvation, because you are not the one who poured you into mold of being in Christ. Somebody had to do that for you. You can’t do that yourself. When he did that, he gave you a salvation that is secure because you’re no longer in Adam; you’re now in Christ. You’ve broken the mold, we could say, from being in Adam. You’re now in Christ. Somebody did that. You didn’t do that yourself. That’s what God did. Paul’s wonderful statement there in verse 17 is, “But thanks be to God.” Friends, if you’re a Christian tonight, just get on your knees and just say, “God, thank you. Thank you.”

Let’s pray. Father, we thank you for the wonderful logic of your servant, Paul. We thank you for the tremendous implication it has upon our lives. Father, again, if I’ve said anything that’s inconsistent with the intention of your Scripture, inconsistent with your holiness, your glory, your majesty or your nature or attributes, would you please remove that, and only those things that are consistent with the Scripture as you intended them to be understood, may the those be the things that we remember. Father, as we leave tonight, let’s don’t individually ask ourselves the question, “What am I going to do?” [UNCLEAR] as the question, “What does this mean to me?” Ask yourself this question, “I understand something different than I did before. Lord, what am I to do about what I just learned?” May we apply this for your grace for the benefit of your kingdom and for God’s glory. And all God’s people said...Amen!!

We have a few moments for some questions if you’d like to entertain a few. You may ask them; it doesn’t mean I’ll answer them.

Audience Member: [UNCLEAR]

Correct. Remember this—all the verses in the Scripture that deal with the assurance of salvation are present tense verbs. They’re not past tense. In other words, there may be a time when you say that’s the time that I trusted Christ. You may have even used the phrase, “I invited Christ into my life.” That’s a weak term because he really invited you into his life so that you would invite yours into his. That may be what you said, and that may be the time of your conversion. But the real evidence is this—what’s going on in my life today. That’s the proof of my salvation, not what I did years ago. The evidence is

right now. Every day you wake up, there ought to be new evidence, because you've broken the mold. You're no longer in Adam; you're now in Christ. That's what Romans 6 is about. The mold has been broken. That's your evidence. Look at yourself in the mirror and say, "Do I see evidence today?" That's really how you know.

***Audience Member:** I'm really touched by the lesson tonight of you were and you have become. It reminded me of our first lesson where we talked about that in the status that we have in God's eyes, we are either children of the devil or children of God. Those are the only two ways that you can look at someone.*

That's right. When you're justified by faith alone, God changes his view of you. Let me explain what I mean by change. Scripture says God doesn't change, so we need to understand that. God doesn't change. My prayers don't change God at all. He's using a term that's bringing it down to our level in human terms. This what Paul says, "I'm speaking in human terms because of your inadequacies." You see, often times, we see God describing his actions in terms that we understand that are based upon our human wisdom and knowledge. It says, "I changed my view of you." He never changed his view of you, because he had one before you were born, before the foundation of the world. He just is using that as an expression to say, "This is...your position has changed as a result of it." God doesn't change. We can't change God and do anything.

***Audience Member:** Bruce, I remember vividly when I was first presented with the doctrine of election, and I was going through your teaching at PNC Bank. I was kind of like abhorred by this prospect of God choosing some and not choosing others. I asked you if you believed in that, and you said yes, you did. But you had never presented that to me in all of your teachings. I still am reluctant to hit people with that. When you're saying that...when you preach that truth, that it's all God's work, and then at that point, it's up to the person if God has prompted them through the Holy Spirit, then for them to respond to that...*

Through the proclamation of a biblical gospel.

***Audience Member:** Yes.*

That's the power. A supernatural, miraculous event. That's what occurs. Charles Spurgeon has the best description of this that I understand. He said, "You don't take people to predestination and election until you've taken them to the college of repentance and faith." You don't start off with election. You start off with repentance and faith. What are you going to do with the person and work of Christ? You see, there's where you start after you've given them the Gospel, which is the holiness of God, the sinfulness of man, the person and work of Christ and repentance and faith. You then say, "What are you going to do about that?" You see, you don't talk about election then or predestination. That's the university stuff. Spurgeon said, "You don't take them to the university of predestination and election until they've gone through the college of repentance and faith."

***Audience Member:** Thank you.*

Very good. Good question.

***Sig:** When you talk about the will and the mind and the heart, right, my question when you were saying that was where does my vocation fit in as a result of being, going through this supernatural transformation of my life. So many of my friends and I always thought, "We should go into Christian ministry. This is so profound, we've got to tell everybody," and then we had some wise people like yourself that taught us about...one of your favorite lines I like that's taught me so much about ministry is*

“who you are where you are.” I guess my question to you is where is our vocation in those three, or is it, I mean, where are we going from here?

Well we need to understand the...Ezekiel 36:22-27 says this—we all have the same purpose. Your purpose is the same as mine, it’s the same as Pastor Tim’s; the same as anybody else who’s a believer. We all have the same person, and that is to be the means by which God demonstrates the fact that he’s holy. That’s what you see in Ezekiel 36, “I will put my spirit within you and cause you to be in obedience, and the world will know that I am holy when they see me through you.” There’s your purpose in life. Now you can choose to be a doctor and do that. You can be a stay-at-home mom and do that. You can do that as a truck driver and do that. You can do that as a banker and do that. You can do that as a teacher. The vocation is really not the issue. The issue is do I understand my purpose.

I have the freedom to pursue whatever I want as long as it’s not unbiblical. Ministry is who you are where you are. The real issue is am I fulfilling my purpose in the vocation I choose? If you want to be a doctor, be a doctor. Your purpose doesn’t change if you’re a doctor or a stay-at-home mom. You have the same purpose. That’s why the kingdom of God is based upon the single purpose of all us are the means by which God puts his life on display. We have this treasure in earthen vessels to show that the all-surpassing power comes from God. (2 Corinthians 4:7) You see, right there is our purpose. If you want the purpose-driven life, you’re the means by which demonstrates the fact that he’s holy. Your vocation can be whatever you want. Pursue it.

***Audience Member:** I just wanted to go back and reiterate when you were talking about breaking the mold. When you go back and look back in the book of Isaiah, and we look in Isaiah 64, it talks about him being the potter, and we are the clay.*

That’s right.

***Audience Member:** And the only way the mold is going to be broken is with us yielding to the Holy Spirit.*

Yes, it’s a supernatural, miraculous experience by a holy God. You see, that’s the point I hope you’ll remember tonight. We do have a methodology. It’s not technology. It’s a supernatural, miraculous, power of God who is our method. We should never forget that. Never lose the supernatural of salvation. Our problem with the church is we’ve made the Gospel human. It is not human. It is supernatural. It’s miraculous. It’s the power of God himself on display as he takes a person from being in Adam and puts them in Christ. You see, the Gospel is supernatural. That’s what you see in what he told Nicodemus, “Nicodemus, until something supernatural happens to you, you can’t even see it. You can’t do it yourself. It’s got to be supernatural.” That’s our methodology.

Well, I could go on and on and get on that soapbox, so that’s enough for tonight.